

Corrie Velasquez

From: President Janine Davidson, Ph.D. <presidentdavidson@communications.msudenver.edu>
Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2023 4:16 PM
To: Corrie Velasquez
Subject: Davidson's Desk: Colorado is desperate for workers. Higher ed is the answer.

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March 2023

Hello,

Colorado's [2022 Talent Pipeline Report](#) said there were two job openings for every available worker last year, an immediate challenge that also brings into question the long-term sustainability of the state economy. The report says most job openings in our advanced workforce require some type of postsecondary education, yet as a state we haven't prioritized the primary pipeline that powers our workforce: higher education.

Colorado is 49th in the country in higher-education funding per student. We have an urgent need to invest in our education system – our state's future – which is what my fellow university presidents and I are [asking of the legislature this session](#). We're grateful that state legislators have worked to increase funding for higher ed in recent years, and we need to continue that trend in order to be nationally competitive.

Sophisticated societies invest in their next generation. That's not an abstract concept to worry about down the road, but something we must act to rectify now. Florida, one of Colorado's competitors in the aerospace industry, spends about 50% more per college student than Colorado does and allows many Floridians to go to college for free through a state-sponsored scholarship program. If we don't produce the highly skilled workers needed to entice companies to set up shop in Colorado and keep them here, we will fall behind.

State investment in higher education and the need for educated workers



Sources:
[Public Higher Education Appropriations per FTE by State, FY 2021](#), State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
[Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020](#), Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce
[2020 Population and Housing State Data](#), U.S. Census Bureau

[Click to view the full-size interactive chart.](#)

The talent report said there was a gap of 79,000 job openings compared with hirings last summer, with unemployment at 3.6%. The federal courts may soon exacerbate the labor shortage too, as they have foreshadowed the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that provides work authorization for [8,500](#) DACA recipients currently in Colorado's workforce.

As Gov. Jared Polis made clear in the report, "To keep up with the demands of our economy, we have to create more opportunities for Coloradans to continue learning and evolving over the course of their careers." He went on to say, "We need to be doing more to help connect Coloradans, our homegrown talent, with skills that lead to good-paying jobs and careers."

I couldn't agree more. Education is the building block of civil society, and we have a responsibility to make it accessible and affordable. We hear it all the time from government leaders promoting their local economies, employers interested in coming here or trying to scale their operations, and students and their parents who want better lives for future generations without breaking the bank.

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education has been hard at work creating a new [strategic plan](#) focused on improving return on investment for students, boosting equity and access, and increasing work-based learning and industry partnerships. If those ideas sound familiar, it's because those are also hallmarks of an MSU Denver education. We are strongly aligned with the commission's goals to provide value, equity and opportunity for students and our state, and we're glad to have them as partners in strengthening higher ed in Colorado.

There is a direct relationship between state investment in higher ed and universities' ability to keep tuition affordable and thus social mobility accessible. Education is the foundation we must invest in to reach the macro outcomes that make Colorado a better place to live. Social mobility for students, talent pipelines for employers, and a thriving economy that works for everyone are key to our collective prosperity and growth.

Sincerely,



Janine Davidson, Ph.D.

President

MSU Denver in the News



MSU Denver plans to expand to help fill health care worker shortage (FOX31)

The University is expanding its programs in an effort to help fill the need for thousands of health care workers in Colorado.

AI arrives on college campuses: How students are using ChatGPT for essays, research and more (Denver7)

MSU Denver faculty, staff and students weigh in on the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence.

MSU Denver working to increase underrepresented Latinos in federal workforce (CBS Colorado)

Despite being one of the fastest-growing populations in the U.S., Latinos remain drastically underrepresented in the federal workforce. The University is working to grow its Institute for Public Service, which is geared towards helping underrepresented students.

President Davidson featured on Colorado Business Roundtable podcast

CoBRT President Debbie Brown hosts Davidson on “A Seat at the Table” to discuss educational leadership and higher ed working with businesses.

Stories from MSU Denver



Program guides students with autism to cybersecurity careers

As demand for skilled tech workers grows, MSU Denver class taps into potential of the neurodiverse.

[READ ABOUT CYBERSECURITY](#)



Pioneering Colorado educator receives national recognition for child advocacy

MSU Denver's Rosemarie Allen joins list of former first ladies, physicians, entertainers and others to receive prestigious T. Berry Brazelton Award.

[READ ABOUT DR. ALLEN](#)



'Lifesaving' stipend puts more teachers in classrooms

As Colorado faces a critical shortage of educators, the state is paying student teachers, creating more viable career paths.

[READ ABOUT EDUCATOR STIPENDS](#)



Voters undecided on choice for mayor but not the value of a college degree

Along with crime and housing, education is among issues Denver voters consider most important, new poll finds.

[READ POLL RESULTS](#)



States remain deadlocked on water crisis

As the Colorado River sinks to a new low, decision-makers refuse to make desperately needed concessions.

[READ ABOUT WATER](#)

Upcoming MSU Denver Events

March 30 | All day

MSU Denver Day of Giving

Join us for the seventh annual MSU Denver Day of Giving on March 30! Day of Giving is a way to provide Roadrunners with the resources they need to rise to reach their goals in the classroom, in their careers and as leaders in their communities. Last year, 1,148 donors helped raise more than \$220,000 to support scholarships, special projects, student-support services, athletics, student clubs/organizations and more. [Day of Giving details](#)

April 12 | 6-8 p.m.

A Conversation on Tibet, Asia and the Global Fight Against Climate Change

MSU Denver, WorldDenver, and the International Women's Forum are thrilled to welcome Lobsang Sangay, Ph.D., former Sikyong (Prime Minister) of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, for a conversation with President Janine Davidson, Ph.D., on the critical role Tibet plays on the global stage. [Event details](#)

May 12 | 9:30 a.m. | 2:30 p.m.

Spring 2023 Commencement

Join us at the Denver Coliseum as Denver Mayor Michael Hancock delivers the morning keynote for graduates of the College of Business and the College of Health and Applied Sciences. MSU Denver Foundation Board Chair Dawn Bookhardt will give the afternoon address to graduates from the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences; School of Education; and School of Hospitality. [More on Commencement](#)



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